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SUBJECT: FIFTY NGOS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS COME
TOGETHER AT EMBASSY-SPONSORED EVENT

Summary

¶1. Embassy Montevideo held its first ever Civil Society Summit on August 28. The event was a huge success, bringing together more than 80 community activists and government officials from 50 organizations. Post used the event to explain to eager but inexperienced local NGOs how best to pursue funding opportunities, and to highlight the local role of the Inter-American Foundation (IAF), an entity without a high profile here despite being active since 1974 in 12 of Uruguay's 19 departments. End Summary.

Embassy Montevideo's First Civil Society Summit a Success

¶2. Post invited representatives from dozens of local organizations to take part in a Civil Society Summit held on August 28 in Montevideo. Post used the NGO Fair that Embassy Buenos Aires sponsors each year as a model from which it shaped an event appropriate for Uruguay's size and civil society needs. The Uruguayan media was on hand to interview the Charge and other key participants. Press coverage of the event was extensive.

The Proceedings

¶3. Charge Matthewman presided over the opening ceremony, and she was followed by a representative of the Uruguayan NGO umbrella organization, the National Association of NGOs (ANONG), who spoke about the important role of coordinating organizations in civil society. Post's Information Resource Center (IRC) also made a presentation informing participants of the services offered through the embassy and how to access grant and other information through the IRC.

¶4. Two panels comprised the remainder of the program. In the first panel, Jeremy Coon, IAF Foundation Representative for Uruguay, Tracy Betts, IDB Country Representative for Uruguay, and Valeria Bolla, World Bank Public Affairs Coordinator in Uruguay, gave presentations on the mechanics of creating a fundable project. They explained concepts and terminology that constitute vital parts of the application process, but with which many local organizations were unfamiliar. The speakers also utilized the venue to present upcoming projects and grant opportunities, and to emphasize the importance of developing civil society in Uruguay. The second panel featured four NGOs discussing successful projects that had been funded by IAF, IDB or World Bank. The NGO "A House, A Dream" won IAF support to build 30 homes for families who had previously lived in shacks. The Dairy Association of Paysand, another grateful IAF grantee, spoke about how their sales grew thanks to an IAF grant. The Support Center for Integral Development (CADI), discussed how IDB financing

helped them build a center for young impoverished children. Finally, the National Union of the Blind talked about its World Bank-funded Braille-language magazine which enabled it to provide blind people with access to current news and other topics of interest.

Increased Mutual Understanding

15. The event contributed significantly to postQs top mission goal of increasing mutual understanding between Uruguay and the U.S. It raised consciousness about U.S. development efforts in Uruguay, while giving embassy personnel the opportunity to learn about civil society in Uruguay. The event allowed the embassy to lead a dialogue between diverse and occasionally competing non-profit groups, and to set a tone of cooperation and embassy involvement. The participants had the opportunity to share information, ideas, and projects that will potentially create future partnerships. Post received excellent feedback on the conference from both the presenters and the participants. Post is also now included on the distribution lists of more local NGOs, giving embassy personnel more awareness of civil society activity. Overall, the event was a valuable undertaking, which helped organizations to cooperate on joint projects that will benefit Uruguayans in need, while at the same time highlighting the positive role the United States plays in assisting those who most need help.

SCHANDLBAUER